



Drama and Trauma

Posted by **Pierluigi Oliverio** on Monday, June 21, 2010

The two city council meetings held last week regarding the budget and labor negotiations demonstrated the need to make all labor negotiations public. If you are interested, you can [click on this link and see for yourself](#) the drama and trauma that took place that still does not have closure. This week's meeting, June 22, will hopefully close this chapter.

I am and have been a proponent of conducting labor negotiations as a public meeting. Unfortunately, when the vote was taken last year to open up labor talks, the vote was a 9-2 against changing the process with only Councilmember Constant and I voting in favor. The process that exists is broken or to say the least, it is severely flawed. The current process of labor negotiations as private meetings hurts those it is meant to help: the employees and taxpayers.

Employees have no choice but to join their respective labor union and are dependent upon having someone else represent them at the bargaining table. It is up to those labor union representatives to inform their membership about the status and timely updates can be a challenge to a large unions. At the same time, Councilmembers are informed by the Office of Employee Relations (OER). However, councilmembers cannot really update residents of what is happening with labor negotiations and their tax dollars since these meetings are private instead of public. In addition the Council only gets one side of the story.

At both Council meetings last week, we saw the drama unfold of broken promises, innuendo, conspiracy theory, stories of personal financial hardship, co-opting of religious clergy and the reading of prepared statements. Behind the smokescreen of this drama were the real people feeling the pain and getting hurt, the employees and residents of San Jose. Both of these groups had to undergo the trauma of being tossed around in public with no one being able to share the full story. As I said at the meeting, 99 percent of city employees do a great job and are real people not faceless bureaucrats.

These city employees protect our safety, our property, our water, our young people, etc. However when you interject labor unions and secret meetings then it can lead to demonizing city employees when this is not fair. The blame should be on the current process which is maintained by both the labor unions and the city of San Jose management.

The taxpayer ultimately has the most at stake since they are the single largest group in San Jose yet they are the least powerful. The taxpayer has a right to know early on how much we have and what we can afford. Only through this dialogue can there be the opportunity for everyone to be on the same page and understand that if we as a city want more services or the same services we might have to pay more for it. On the other hand, if everyone is on the same page then structural change can be demanded so services are delivered more efficiently.

I am hopeful that the June 22 meeting is peaceful and we accomplish our duties civilly.

On a happier note, I am hosting the raising of the Rainbow flag at City Hall at 1PM, Tuesday, June 22 in celebration of the accomplishments and contributions of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LBGT) community in San Jose.

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, June 21, 2010